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Elizabeth Tammi

Outrun the Wind

United States (2002)

TAGS: Apollo Artemis Atalanta Calydonian Boar Hippomenes Meleager





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Outrun the Wind
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States of America, United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2002
First Edition Details	Elizabeth Tammi, *Outrun the Wind*. Minnesota: Flux, 2018, 320 pp.
ISBN	9781635830262
Genre	Fantasy fiction, Mythological fiction, Romance fiction
Target Audience	Young adults (and Teenagers)
Author of the Entry	Jean Menzies, University of Roehampton, menziesj@roehampton.ac.uk
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Creators



Elizabeth Tammi (Author)

Elizabeth Tammi is a US-based author and journalist who began to study Creative Writing and English Literature at Mercer University, Georgia in 2019. *Outrun the Wind* is her debut young adult novel published by Flux who are also publishing her second novel The *Weight* of *Her Soul*, based on Norse mythology, which is due out in 2019. Outside her creative writing endeavours she has worked in both televised and print media.

Bio prepared by Jean Menzies, University of Roehampton, menziesj@roehampton.ac.uk

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Additional information

Summary

Outrun the Wind, the debut Young Adult novel by Elizabeth Tammi, is told through the dual perspectives of Atalanta, the ancient heroine of Greek mythology, and Kahina, a fictionalised huntress of Artemis created by the author. When Kahina saves Atalanta from Artemis' Calydonian Boar by killing the beast she is sent by the goddess to complete a quest in order to regain her favour. Artemis orders Kahina to travel to a distant city in order to transform a temple belonging to her brother, Apollo, into a temple of her own. It is whilst in this kingdom that Kahina comes back in contact with Atalanta.

After Atalanta's close escape from the Calydonian Boar she flees the forest and finds herself performing in street fights for money. As her reputation spreads, her long-lost father King Iasus locates her and asks her to return home with him. Atalanta is elated by the prospect of a family she never thought she would have and returns to her father's kingdom where she meets Kahina, unaware this is the huntress who saved her life once before. The two women share an initially antagonistic relationship that slowly develops into a close friendship and then something more. The love they share for one another is put at risk, however, by Atalanta's father who wishes her to marry in order to secure an alliance between their kingdom and another. In the hopes of avoiding Atalanta's marriage, Kahina suggests that the princess challenge her potential suitors to a race. In order to claim her hand a man must first defeat her in a test of speed; a skill in which Atalanta is unmatched. From there we follow events in Arcadia as Atalanta takes on suitor after suitor and the two women come to terms with their feelings for one another.

Analysis

Outrun the Wind follows the major mythological events recorded in the ancient sources for Atalanta's life. Although we do not meet her prior to her relationship with Meleager, therefore skipping over her journey on the Argo in mythology, we are immediately alerted to her close bond with the prince. The opening chapter follows the group of heroes who have set out to hunt the Calydonian boar, including Meleager and Atalanta. As in Greek mythology the boar is a curse on King Oeneus, Meleager's father, from the goddess Artemis. The hunt ends with Meleager's death, however, veering away from Greek mythological tradition.

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More important to Tammi's story, however, is that the boar hunt provides an opportunity for her to introduce Kahina: the second narrator. This is the point in the story where the two young women first come in contact although Atalanta never sees her saviour. It is from this initial impulsive act of Kahina's, to save Atalanta and upset her patron goddess, Artemis, that a relationship gradually develops throughout the story. Tammi's purpose in conveniently killing of Meleager at this point is to further her own narrative by offering Atalanta the opportunity to shift her romantic feelings onto the new character: Kahina. This is not the only point in the story where Tammi strays from mythological tradition. During the famous footraces between Atalanta and her suitors, Hippomenes is able to defeat her by using golden apples gifted to him by Aphrodite to distract the princess while she runs, thus overtaking her. In *Outrun the Wind* it is Apollo who gives these apples to Hippomenes in order to maintain an ongoing contrast between Artemis and her brother.

Later in the novel, Atalanta and Hippomenes are transformed by Apollo into lioness and lion respectively. In Greek myth they are either transformed into lions by Zeus, Rhea or Aphrodite for different reasons in each case; either they desecrate Zeus' temple by having sex in it or Aphrodite feels inadequately honoured by Hippomenes after she helped him win Atalanta. Each of these changes is made for one of two reasons (if not both at the same time): to maintain a consistent narrative for the modern reader and to consciously explore the unequal gender roles present in ancient Greek society and mythology

As a woman in Greek myth who already defies the confines of her gender expectations, Atalanta is a perfect subject for Tammi's creative endeavour. Through following the Greek heroine's life as a complete narrative we witness the way in which people reacted to her as an outsider who behaved unlike women were expected to do, and how these same people attempted to make her better fit the role mapped out for her in society. Atalanta is a princess whose value to her people is to marry and gain a lucrative alliance for her family. As is consistent with her ancient mythological depiction, marriage is not the thing that she desires: in fact it is a threat to her way of life. Tammi takes this further by introducing the possibility that Atalanta may have felt differently if she were allowed to marry a woman. With a lack of female authored texts apart from Sappho's surviving from antiquity, our first hand insight into women's feelings towards relationships is limited but Tammi offers a perspective influenced by her experience of

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LGBTQ+ culture in the 21st century. In doing so she highlights the coercive actions of Hippomenes who effectively forces himself upon Atalanta.

The introduction of Kahina to the story offers a parallel story of a woman quite different to Atalanta but equally stifled by the patriarchal society she inhabits. Kahina is a priestess of Apollo. She was abducted and sold by her own cousin, who, in Tammi's story, is Hippomenes, highlighting the dangers of the slave trade in ancient Greece. She then becomes a priestess of Apollo and is given the 'gift' of prophecy. This gift is used as a metaphor for Kahina's own lack of choices. She is shimmied back and forth throughout Greece to fulfil roles others expect of her, and is never asked what she wants; just as she is forced to parrot the prophecies of a god she did not chose whilst being denied her own voice.

The novel uses mythological characters and events to examine contemporary society as much as it does the ancient world. Tammi draws out the timeless stories of women who are denied their own decisions and provides them with a hopeful future in the relationship between Kahina and Atalanta. Alone, as she is in myth, Atalanta cannot escape her fate, but with the introduction of the love between herself and Kahina, love the possibility of happiness is renewed.

Both central characters = are young women at a certain point in their life, no-longer children and on the cusp of womanhood. The concept of 'teenage years' is not one that appears to have existed in antiquity when girls were married when still young. The young women in *Outrun the Wind*, however, reflect that period in life when young women are discovering themselves while adjusting to a world that suddenly sees them differently.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Apollo Artemis Atalanta Calydonian Boar Hippomenes Meleager
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant	Coming of age Family Friendship LGBTQI Love Parents (and children) Queer Relationships Romance Siblings

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